

EXAMINING THE LEVEL OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG SEMESTER ONE STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA PAHANG

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is defined as the capacity to reason about emotions. An individual needs to have equilibrium between academic intelligence and emotional intelligence so that s/he will be able to face and take challenges in life in a healthy way. This paper presents a pilot study that looks into the level of emotional intelligence among in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Pahang. 30 semester one students from various faculties in UiTM Pahang were randomly selected. Using Tapia's Emotional Quotient Inventory as an instrument for data collection, the analysis indicates that, on the whole, the respondents only scored an average level of emotional intelligence. The findings also reveal low means score for sub-skills of emotional intelligence such as self-regulation and motivation. Such findings have very important pedagogical implications on inculcating and enhancing these students' level of emotional intelligence abilities.

KEY WORDS: *emotional intelligence, Tapia's Emotional Quotient Inventory, self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, motivation*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EQ) has been stated as one of the significant factors that not only could contribute to one's academic achievement but also the life's success as a whole. It is generally defined as 'the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking' (Mayer and Salovey, 1997, p. 197). Mayer and Salovey also claim that EQ also includes the abilities to 'accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth' (1997, p. 197).

Evidence has shown that intellectual intelligence (IQ) is not a solid determiner of success in life. As put forward by Goleman (1995, p. 17), 'the level of IQ contributes only about 20% of towards one's accomplishment, while the rest are determined by emotional intelligence'. People with high EQ are able to channel disappointment, frustration, stress and other negative feelings

into positive and rational perspectives. They are more motivated and mentally strong when faced with difficulties in life. On the contrary, those who lack EQ have problems in controlling their own feelings and have high tendency to be stress and burn out (Cherniss, 2000). Lack of EQ has also been associated with negative consequences such as low academic achievement, poor reputation, poor relationship with others and dissatisfied individuals.

In Malaysia, most levels of society place great value on academic success. Excellent examinations results are regarded as the yardstick for one's achievement in life. However, we need to realize that the goal of education does not depend on the number of A's that a student scores, but on how s/he uses her/her intelligence in other aspects of life such as relationship with others and making decisions. Thus, there is a strong need for the country to develop and produce balanced individuals that have both the equilibrium between intellectual and emotional intelligence.

The present study is prompted by the need to look into the level of emotional intelligence among young generation in this country as the writers strongly believe that they are the nation's greatest asset. It would be a disappointment if the produced generation is highly intellectual, but lacking in emotional intelligence. Thus, this study examines the level of emotional intelligence among UiTM students, who definitely are intelligent enough to be accepted into the university level of education, so that any recommendations can be proposed to relevant authorities in producing generation who is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of EQ has been a key interest in the psychology field as it largely contributes to individual's achievement in life as a whole rather than academic achievement alone (Barchard, 2003; Styss and Brown, 2004; Fernandez-Berrocal and Extremera, 2006; Adeyomo 2007).

There are many definitions given to EQ. However, the converging feature is using emotions accordingly in order to think, decide and take proper action. For example, Mayer, Salovey, Caruso and Sitarenios (2001, p. 267), amended their earlier definition of EQ as follows:

Emotional intelligence refers to an ability to recognize the meanings of emotion and their relationships, and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them. Emotional intelligence is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions, and manage them.

Along the same line, Goleman (1998) defines EQ as 'the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those for others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationship'. EQ has also been widely defined by researchers and experts in the area. The following table summarises some of the definitions:

Table 1: Definitions of Emotional Intelligence (Source: Orme, 2001)

Researcher / Expert	Definition
Geetu Orme (author 'What is Emotional Intelligence?')	the ability to tune into emotions, understand them and take appropriate action and add up to advanced common sense
David Caruso (co-designer of Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS))	the ability to use your emotions to help solve problems and live a more effective life.
Kate Cannon (inventor of the world's first emotional intelligence in American Express Financial Services)	is about using the power of emotion as a source of information, motivation and connection
Liz Morris (Buckhold Associates/ Center for Applied Emotional Intelligence)	the practice of paying attention to one's own and other people's emotional states and using the information to inform one's action
Esther Orioli (creator of EQ map)	the ability to sense, understand, and effectively apply the power of emotions as a source of energy, information, creativity, trust and connection
David Ryback (author of 'Putting Emotional Intelligence at Work')	involves the ability to read the unspoken feelings in individuals as well as the collective dynamic

To understand EQ further, a few models of EQ have been conceptualized. Mayer and Salovey (2001) for example, came out with 'The Four-Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence'. These four branches involve: 1) emotional perception and expression that relates into recognizing and inputting both verbal and non-verbal information from the emotion system; 2) emotional facilitation of thoughts which relates to using emotions for cognitive processes such as problem solving; 3) cognitive processing of emotions which relates to bringing insights and knowledge to bear upon feelings of oneself or others; and 4) emotional management which functions to regulate emotion in oneself and others.

In the same vein, Bar-On (2007) suggests ten factorial components of emotional intelligence which are summed up as follows:

1. Self-regard : the ability to accurately perceive and appraise ourselves
2. Emotional awareness : the ability to be aware of and understand our emotion

3. Assertiveness : the ability to constructively express our emotions and ourselves
4. Stress tolerance : the ability to effectively manage our emotions
5. Impulse control : the ability to effectively control our emotion
6. Reality testing : the ability to objectively validate our feelings and thoughts
7. Flexibility : the ability to adapt and adjust our feelings and thought to new situation
8. Problem solving : the ability to solve our personal and interpersonal problems
9. Empathy : the ability to be aware of and understand others' emotion
10. Internal relationship : the ability to relate well with others

Along the same line, Goleman (1998, p. 376) puts forward five basic subskills of emotional and competencies that can be used to examine the one's EQ level that are described as below.

1. Self-awareness : Knowing what we are feeling in at the moment, and use those preferences to guide our decision making, having a realistic assessment of our own abilities and a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.
2. Emotional awareness : Handling our emotions so that they facilitate rather than interfere with task at hand; being conscientious and delaying gratification to pursue goals; recovering well from emotional distress.
3. Self-motivation : Using our deepest preferences to move and guide us toward our goals, to help us take initiative and strive to improve, and to preserve in the face of setbacks and frustrations.
4. Empathy : Sensing what people are feeling, being able to take their perspective, and cultivating rapport and attunement with a broad diversity of people.
5. Social skills : Handling emotions in relationship well and accurately reading social situations and networks; interacting smoothly; using these skills to persuade and lead negotiate and settle disputes for co-operation and teamwork.

As EQ has received numerous interests, a lot of instruments have been developed to measure the level of EQ. Among those developed are Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS) by Mayer, Salovey, Caruso and Chulk Wolfe Associates, Bar-On EQ-I by Bar-On and Multi Health System, Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQI) by Tapia. All of these instruments examine the dimensions of EQ based on items scored on five-point rating scale.

Numerous studies have employed these instruments to measure the level of EQ from various perspectives such as age, job performance, social relationship, parental involvement, level of anxiety, deviant behaviour, self-efficacy and gender (Barchard, 2003; Bar-On, 2005; Fernandez-Berrocal and Extremera, 2006; Adeyomo 2007).

The similar research has been done by Sutarso et al (1996) whereby 138 students in University of Alabama had been chosen as the respondents in this research. They have been given one set of *Emotional Intelligence Inventory*. Based on the finding, there was a significant difference between female students and male students. Furthermore, in the same research, the female students got higher scores in subskills empathy and self regulation. Tapia (1999) has also conducted a similar research to the school students (n=139). In this study, it has been found that the female students have higher EQ as compared to the male students.

In the other hand, Mayer (2001) has studied on emotional intelligence for 11 teenagers aged between 13 until 17 years old. The findings shows that teenagers who have high emotional intelligence are emotionally stable and matured in social relationship. They also have their own principle and are not easily influenced with the negative behavior from peers. In line with the research, Noriah et al has conducted a similar research in 2001 (n=60). In her study, the level of emotional intelligence was found increasing with age.

Fernandez-Berrocal and Extremera (2006) in their study of EQ between genders found that female students have higher empathy as compared to their male counterparts. The findings support Rosenthal and Halls' test on non-verbal sensitivity (in Goleman, 1998) that shows women are better at guessing other people's emotion than men. Such ability helps them to be more emphatic with those around them. An alarming finding on gender difference on EQ is the effect of lacking EQ on individuals. Bracket et al. (2004, p.17) study shows that male students who have low emotional skills 'demonstrate significantly more involvement than females in potentially harmful behaviours such as using illegal drugs ... and engaging in deviant behaviour'.

Along the same line, Petrides, Fredrickson and Furnham (2004) examine the relationship between EQ and academic achievement. They found that EQ plays an important role in helping low IQ students to cope with the demand and pressure in their studies. They discovered that low IQ students with high trait of EQ are better able to deal with stress and have wider social interaction that could help them improve their studies. On the contrary, those with low trait of EQ are unable to cope with stress and have poor rapport with their teachers and peers, thus, unable to perform well in their studies. Another finding that should be of concern is that students with low trait of EQ have high possibility to be expelled from school as they are usually involved in truancy because they do not like going to school.

2.1 The Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the level of emotional intelligence among students with intelligence in UiTM Pahang. Specifically it looks into the overall level of EQ and its five basic subskills of emotional and competencies as proposed by Goleman (1998). The findings will be able to help develop a better understanding of EQ and its roles towards achieving balanced individuals emotionally and intellectually. This can be expressed in the following research questions:

1. What is the overall level of emotional intelligence among the students?

2. What is level of emotional intelligence according to the subskills of emotional and competencies (self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills and motivation) among the students?

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted and adapted Tapia's Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQI) as an instrument to measure the students' level of EQ. The original inventory consists of 41 items; however, this study only chose 30 items that are more relevant to the environment and culture of the respondents. The Bahasa Malaysia (BM) version of the statements in the questionnaire was given below the English ones to enable the respondents to complete it without any language difficulty.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part looked at the demographic background of the learners such as age, gender, and grades obtained for the English subject in their SPM examination.

For this part, the questionnaire adopted both open-ended and close-ended questions. The second part consisted of thirty statements which were later categorised under the subskills of emotional competencies, namely, self-awareness (items no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), self-regulation (items no. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), empathy (items no. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18), social skills (items no. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24) and motivation (items no. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30). The learners were asked to rate each positive statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'never like me', 'occasionally like me', 'sometimes like me', 'frequently like me' to 'always like me'.

3.1 Data Collection

The actual study intends to collect data from the whole population of semester one students in UiTM Pahang. However, the present paper only reports data from a sampling size of 30 of the population as the writers are still in the process of examining the relevancy of the items in the EQ measurement instrument to the environment and culture of the target population. The questionnaires were distributed to 30 semester one students with the help of the writers' colleague.

Semester one students have been chosen as the sampling population as the writers strongly feel that since they are new to the university environment, it will be more meaningful to investigate their EQ level in terms of laying out plans and programmes to enhance and nurture their EQ. With a longer period of time in the university (as compared to students in higher semesters), these students will be able to have more opportunities to participate in any EQ enhancement programmes carried out.

3.2 Data Analysis

The data were treated quantitatively involving simple frequency counts of the items in Part II of the questionnaires. The responses from each item were tabulated according to the respective

columns of the scale and reported according to the relevant subskills. In addition, the composite score of the EQ for the whole respondents was determined by using total score in SPSS. The frequency statistics was then used to get the total mean score of the respondents' EQ. The level of EQ was classified under three categories based on the mean score as shown below.

Table 2: Mean Score and Categories of EQ Level

Total Mean Score	Categories of EQ Level
1.00 - 2.33	Low
2.34 - 3.66	Average
3.67 - 5.00	High

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

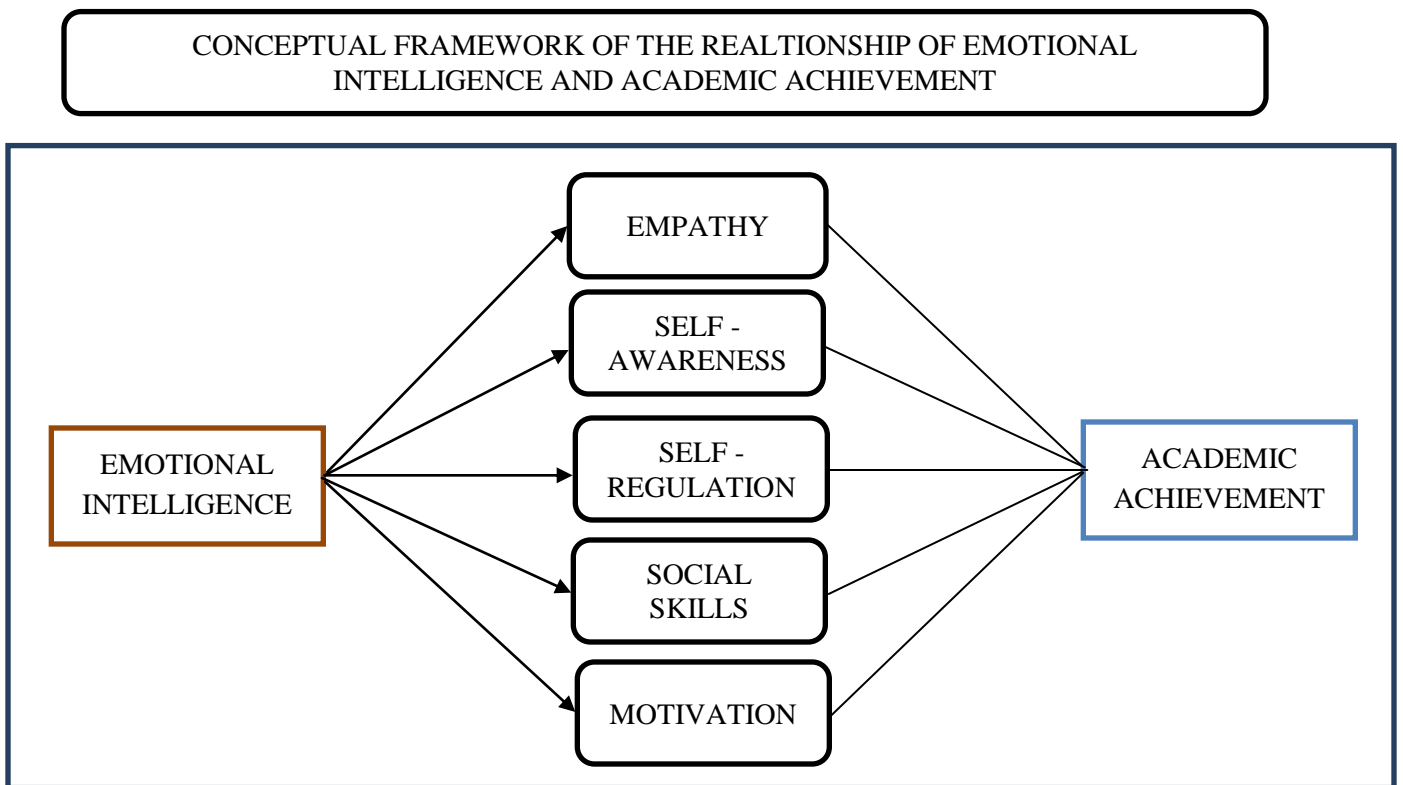


Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the relationship of emotional intelligence and academic achievement

Figure 1 has enclosed the relationship of emotional intelligence and academic achievement. From the conceptual framework of the relationship of emotional intelligence and academic achievement, it can be concluded that the students' academic achievement is influenced by the level of emotional intelligence. Although the study is still at its early stage, the data disclose some important information with regards to the level of EQ among the students. The background

information shows that 29 of the students are between the ages of 18 – 20 years old. Only 1 student is in the 21 – 22 year old range. Thus, the results of the study can be very beneficial both to the students and those concerned in the student development programme. As EQ can be easier to instill and inculcated at this young age, various programmes and activities can be promoted to develop their EQ.

The background information also reveals that these students are quite intelligent from the academic perspectives. Their SPM results show that 27 (90%) of them obtained grade A at least in one of the subjects. The results indicate that 3 (10%) of these students scored 1A, 5 (16.7%) scored 2As, 8 (26.7%) scored 3As, 5 (16.7%) scored 4As, 3(10%) scored 5As and 3 (10%) scored 6As. However, as attested in the literature of EQ, high academic achievement does not mean high level of EQ. The analysis of the data shows that the overall mean for the level of EQ among the students is only 3.084 which can be interpreted as medium.

The data also indicate that among the five subskills examined, empathy scores the highest mean (mean=3.45) among the students, although for the EQ level it is considered only medium or average. On the contrary, self-regulation scores the lowest (mean = 2.73). This score, according to the EQ level, falls under the low category.

Table 4: Level of Emotional Intelligence according to Subskills of Emotional Competencies

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-awareness	30	3.0722	.50795
Self-regulation	30	2.7333	.43900
Empathy	30	3.4500	.44882
Social Skills	30	3.2444	.44363
Motivation	30	2.9222	.44578

4.1 Empathy

As mentioned previously, empathy scores the highest mean among the subskills of EQ (mean=3.45). The data show that these students are able to empathize with others in situations that need them to be so (items no. 13, 14 and 15). It is also a relief to know that these students do consider other people’s feeling when making decisions (item no. 16) and are able to see things from other people’s point of view (item no. 17). Unfortunately, however, it is quite heartrending to know that some of the students are more concerned about their own self (i.e of their evaluation mark in classroom presentation) rather than group mates’ feelings (items no. 18). This is not surprising as to most students, examination results matters more than anything else.

4.2 Social Skills

The social skill component of the EQ subskills scores the second highest among the students (mean=3.244). This shows that these students do not really have problems in their interpersonal

relationship with others. However, a low score in item no. 24 suggests that these students prefer to take part in other social activities rather than the ones prescribed by the faculty or university. Perhaps this is due to the nature of the activities themselves which may be regulated by certain rules or requirement.

4.3 Self-awareness

On the whole, self-awareness scores the third highest mean among the subskills of EQ (mean=3.0722). As can be seen from Table 7, the students are aware of their emotions moderately. Most of them ranked the positive items like items no. 2, 3, and 5 as ‘sometimes like me’ and ‘frequently like me’. The results also indicate that these students are aware of their change of emotions (items no. 5) although they find it hard to understand and describe their reactions and feelings in any particular situation (items no. 1, 4, and 6).

4.4 Motivation

It is rather alarming to find out that these young students have quite low motivation in their life. This subskill scores the second lowest mean (mean=2.9222) compared to the other subskills. Most of them ranked the positive items (items no. 26, 27 and 28) as ‘sometimes like me’ and ‘frequently like me’ only. Similarly, the negative items (25, 29 and 30) were also ranked as ‘sometimes like me’.

4.5 Self-regulation

The analysis also indicates that self-regulation scores the lowest among the subskills of EQ (mean=2.7333). Although the data show that most of these students are able to regulate themselves when/after dealing with other people (items no. 8, 9 and 11), they seem to need help in handling their own personal feelings and emotions (items no. 7 and 10). Almost all of the students admitted being nervous at having to present in front of the class (item no. 12). However, the writers feel that this is a common feeling among a lot of people which can be reduced with practice and experience.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Although this study is very limited in its scope, the findings have highlighted some important information with regards to the level of emotional intelligence among our students. It seems that these high academic achievers only have an average or medium level of emotional intelligence. What is more worrying is the fact that these students have very low motivation in life. Having looked at the significance of EQ in life, there definitely is a strong need for EQ to be inculcated in our students so that their education outcomes would be more meaningful.

The study also showed that individuals at different ages have different levels of emotional intelligence. As a person ages, his level of emotional intelligence will be increasing too (Syed Najmuddin, 2005). Thus, the implementation and training to improve EQ can be made during the four years they were in university because EQ can definitely be learned.

With the increasing number of social problems involving youths nowadays, such as juvenile delinquencies, pre-marital sex, baby abandonment, drug abuse and other criminal activities, the level of EQ among them is definitely questionable. The writers strongly believe that concerted efforts from relevant parties and authorities are needed to enhance and develop EQ among the young generation. As EQ can be instilled, taught and learned (Bar-On 2007), perhaps it could be integrated in the educational policy as well as the integration of its skills in the syllabus.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writers would like to express their gratitude to Mdm Nur Hazwani Haslah from the Academy of Language Studies UiTM Pahang for her help in the process of data collection.

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